

-----  
Title: Ethical Hedonism: An Introduction

Author: Richard Garriott  
-----

Societies oft have  
common codes of  
conduct which it  
expects all its people  
to abide by. Now,  
while 'tis true that  
this can offer some  
advantages, most of  
the codes I see today  
around Britannia have  
fatal flaws. Let us  
examine them.

First, there is  
Blackthorn's code of  
Chaos or basically  
Anarchy. Whereas  
this affords the  
individual maximum  
opportunity for  
individuality and even  
pursuit of personal  
happiness, it does not  
offer even basic  
interpersonal conduct  
codes to prevent  
people from killing  
each other.

Without such basic  
tenets, all the people  
will need to spend a  
significant portion of  
their time and effort  
towards personal  
protection and thus  
less time towards  
other more beneficial  
pursuits.

Then there are the  
moral codes that are  
so popular today.  
These codes are built  
largely on historical  
tradition rather than  
current logic and thus  
are also antiquated.  
For example many  
moral codes we see  
today include

statements about not eating certain foods that once were often poisonous, but today can be prepared safely.

Many forbid contact between young people of the opposite gender, which can in fact be hazardous; but the codes often have lost the context as to why this is done, instead merely calling it amoral. In this day and age to call that a necessary moral would need a new reasoning. I put forth that tradition is not enough

Then there are Lord British's Virtues. It strikes me that while a system of virtues is wonderful as a touchstone to guide a society to good behavior, these are but shades of the underlying truth as to why one may wish to live a life according to certain rules of conduct.

On the other hand, clearly the Virtues that I have heard Lord British speak of are clearly positive codes of conduct, far better than the world of anarchy that Lord Blackthorn suggests. Yet, are not these Virtues still derived from a set of principles which though they sound good, are difficult to pin down as actual, undeniable, rational truths?

Worse yet though imagine a society who's code of

conduct was based on pure survival of the strongest. While this society may function and even accomplish much, it can be fairly argued that personal happiness would suffer greatly, except for those at the top. To rule that out, however, we must first believe that people have a right to pursue happiness.

I hope is a safe assumption that all beings wish to be happy; I will broadly describe this as Hedonism. Yet, if all people did is live a life of hedonism, their hedonism might be in conflict with those near them, so I will use the term Ethics to describe limits one might put on one's hedonistic tendencies to allow others to pursue their happiness as well.

Allow me to give this example: If one were to live alone on a desert isle, one could live a life of pure hedonism, for no action one might take could interfere with another's right to pursue their happiness. Poison the lake if you like, there is no one to blame but yourself!

Now suppose two of you live on that island. Thou dost not want thy neighbor to feel free to poison the lake. Would it not be better to consider it unethical to poison the lake without first thinking of those

whose pursuit of happiness might be affected by this action?

I put forth that it is the fact that we as a people choose to live in groups known as a society that causes us to compromise our pure hedonism with logical ethics.

Likewise we accept not being able to kill others without reason, because our own pursuit of happiness would be greatly interfered with if we feared others would do the same to us. From this basis of logic can be formed the Tenets of Ethical Hedonism.

For more on this subject, see The Tenants of Ethical Hedonism, by Richard Garriott and Herman Miller.